

the heartbeat

RECRUITMENT OF SECOND DDFT COHORT ONGOING

Recruitment efforts continue to find the best and brightest in Micronesia who will become the second cohort of DDFT students. Mr Robert Spegal, DDFT Program Manager, will be visiting high schools in all four States of the FSM to find candidates for the next cohort, which will begin instruction on the National Campus of COM-FSM in June 2017 with a summer basic science boot camp. This basic science summer boot camp will introduce students to the health sciences and medical math using the Problem-based Learning (PBL) approach.

The second cohort will join students from all four states who are now completing their third semester in the two-and-a-half year DDFT program. Students from the first cohort routinely cite the summer boot camp as one of the highlights of the DDFT program, as this is where they first introduced to the PBL approach, a system that is not widely used in high schools, and began to build confidence in themselves in solving real-life medical problems. DDFT



Mr Robert Spegal, DDFT Program Manager, meets with students at the Seventh Day Adventist School in Kolonia, PNI

students also cite the summer boot camp as an opportunity to gain more social confidence in themselves, through public speaking and presentations, as well as through working with students from across the FSM. The second cohort will receive all of these benefits, as well as access to the many wrap-around services offered by the DDFT program, including counselling, study hall, special tutoring sessions, and more as they prepare to be the healthcare providers and leaders of tomorrow.



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Students Address COM-FSM Faculty on Advantages of PBL

Three DDFT students recently had the opportunity to address a meeting of the College of Micronesia FSM faculty from the National and Pohnpei State Campuses. Ms Caroline Apaisam, Ms Naomi Nakasone, and Ms Scarlett Lebehen were chosen to speak on their experience with DDFT and also the PBL learning process. All three spoke of the benefits of learning by solving real-life problems, and how working as a team has not only helped them gain confidence in themselves, but also become more comfortable working with students from other states in the FSM. COM-FSM faculty responded well to the presentation, citing how impressed they were with the confidence of the DDFT student to speak professionally in front of such a large gathering, as well as the apparent benefits to student involvement through the PBL process.



Naomi Nakasone, Caroline Apaisam, and Scarlett Lebehen address the faculty and staff of the College of Micronesia FSM on the benefits of a PBL-based curriculum



Three presenting students with Dr Brian Mangum and Ms Holly Lyons, who also spoke along with Dr Paul Dacanay

Dr Paul Dacanay, Ms Holly Lyons, and Dr Brian Mangum, also spoke to the faculty on how PBL creates greater engagement on the part of students, as well as enhanced satisfaction on the part of faculty members as they see their students gain confidence in their ability to solve real-life problems. Dr Mangum gave examples of how DDFT uses PBL to do this, such as using bacterial skin infections and dermatology as the vehicle for teaching the integumentary system in anatomy and physiology. Or using basic trauma life support to teach the physiology of homeostasis.

The meeting, which was sponsored by COM-FSM Vice President for Instructional Affairs Ms Karen Simion, was used to introduce COM-FSM faculty to the PBL methods used by the DDFT program, and also present an opportunity for COM-FSM faculty to adopt PBL in their own teaching with assistance from the DDFT faculty. At the request of Ms Simion, the DDFT faculty will also present on the success of the PBL-based program to the COM-FSM Board of Regents.

DDFT Faculty Present PBL Curriculum to COM-FSM Board of Regents

Dr Paul Dacanay, Ms Holly Lyons, and Dr Brian Mangum presented to the COM-FSM Board of Regents on the success of the PBL-based DDFT program.

The DDFT faculty spoke at the invitation of COM-FSM administration in the wake of a successful presentation to the COM-FSM faculty in which much enthusiasm was garnered for both DDFT as well as the potential adoption of more PBL-based teaching across COM-FSM. Dr Dacanay spoke on the history of the DDFT program, its goals, and how it is working to provide the next generation of healthcare providers and leaders to Micronesia in answer to the growing crisis in human resources for health.

Ms Lyons spoke on how PBL can be used in a range of class types, including English language instruction, as a means of creating scholar-practitioner graduates who are prepared to address healthcare crisis through researched, evidence-based approaches.

And finally, Dr Mangum spoke about he uses real-life patient cases on a daily basis in his courses to teach students the basic sciences in a fun and engaging way that builds confidence, and will prepare them for entry into medical and dental programs in the region that also use a PBL approach.

The presentation was well received by the Board of Regents, who thanked the faculty for their hard-work and dedication.

Students Use Personality Test to Improve Performance and Identify Possible Specialty Matches

DDFT students recently had the opportunity to take a modified version of the Meyers Briggs Personality Test.

The purpose of the test was to help students identify their particular learning styles and identify common barriers to effective study for students in their learning style, as well as provide strategies to overcome such. As an offshoot of the personality test, students also learned what medical specialties were a good fit for their personality type.

For example, those who found that their personality was focused on introversion, intuition, feeling and judgement, learned that they enjoy independent learning, easily ask questions in class, and contribute original ideas in solving patient problems. While at the same time, they are prone to procrastination and have difficulty working in a loud environment, and as such should find ways to motivate themselves and a quiet place to study.

Those who come from this personality type are most comfortable in the fields of psychiatry, internal medicine, general surgery and pathology; all fields that are in short supply in Micronesia.

Access to the Meyers Briggs Personality Test is just one more way that DDFT is providing students with the extra tools they need for success as the future healthcare leaders and providers of Micronesia.

Medical Oddities and Trivia

What do sheep have to do with blood transfusions

Today blood transfusion is a common lifesaving treatment for trauma patients, surgical patients, and others. Jean-Baptiste Denys, personal physician to France's Louis XIV, is generally credited with performing the first human blood transfusion. In 1667, Denys transfused a 15-year-old boy who had been bled so much by his doctor that he required an infusion of blood with sheep's blood. And somehow, the kid survived! Subsequent transfusions using sheep's blood were not as successful, however, and the practice was eventually banned. Physicians at the time were unaware of the danger not only of interspecies transfusions but of the fact that human beings possessed different, generally incompatible, blood types. The four major blood groups were not identified until the first decade of the 20th century; by World War I transfusions had become more common.

Mystery foreign body in the eye

A twelve-year old boy was brought to the paediatrician by his parents after the boy complained that he could not see well out of his left eye, and that he was sensitive to light. When the paediatrician examined the boy, he found that the eye was red and painful and contained small fine hair-like foreign bodies buried deep in the outer layer of the cornea. The boy revealed that he loved playing in the empty fields near his house and collecting caterpillars. The foreign bodies in the eye were later identified as caterpillar hair.

Can buttoning your shirt cause a panic attacks

Louisa Francis is thirty-four-year old mother who lives in Newcastle, England. She also suffers from Koumpounophobia, or fear of buttons. When Louisa was seven years old a childhood game that involved buttons, and which she refuses to even name owing to her immense fear, so terrified her that to this day the sight of buttons can cause panic attacks. She refuses to buy her daughter clothes with buttons, and during a recent trip to the super market had to leave before making her purchases when the checkout girl had a shirt with oversized buttons on it. Like most phobia patients, Louisa knows that her fear is irrational, but that doesn't make it any less real to her. Louisa is now studying counselling to help herself and others learn to deal with phobias such as Koumpounophobia.

Grand Rounds

Rebekkah is a friendly, six-year-old girl, who presents to the outpatient department at Pohnpei State Hospital with her mother.

The mother describes how Rebekkah fell off her bike the week before and had many grazed areas, including one on her chin. All the areas had healed well except for the one on her chin, which was still weeping and appeared to be getting larger. The mother also expressed a concern about a similar patch Rebekkah had since developed on her finger. All areas of concern were assessed and appeared satisfactory except for the facial one and the one on her finger.

The areas were red and inflamed and contained many small, fluid filled vesicles. One small patch on her chin had formed a honey-coloured crusted area but the majority of the lesions were blistered or weeping.

Social history reveals that Rebekkah attends school, and that several of her classmates have had similar lesions on their hands and mouth.

Rebekkah said that she felt fine, although her mother reported that she was more lethargic than usual. She was afebrile and appeared clinically well.

What is the most likely diagnosis, how would you treat it, and should Rebekkah be excluded from school?

DDFT students, if you know the diagnosis please email Dr Mangum to receive two extra credit points on your next examination.



Medicine Goes to the Movies

It's a well-known fact that the DDFT students love movies. So, with the release of the DDFT recruitment videos, and our knowledge of how much the DDFT students love a good thriller, 'romcom,' or even drama, The Heartbeat has decided to list our top five movies that deal with medicine from a realistic as well as an entertaining standpoint and from which students can watch and learn.

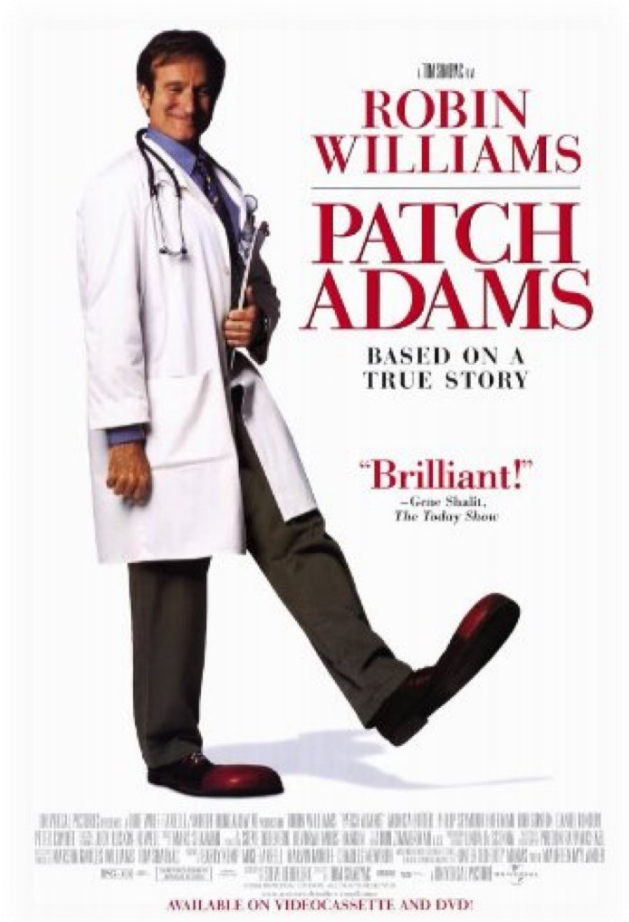
Patch Adams (1998) starring Robin Williams as a paediatrician teaches students that laughter is sometimes the best medicine, and the importance of connecting with patients at a deeper level.

Awakenings (1990), also starring Robin Williams is a real tearjerker, but it highlights the critical research of Dr Malcom Sayer (Williams) who discovers the use of L-dopa in the treatment of Parkinson's disease (didn't we talk about that in anatomy?).

Girl, Interrupted (1999), starring Winona Ryder and Angelina Jolie, examines the treatment of mental illness in the 1960s, and encourages medical students to do more to address the stigma of mental illness in today's society.

Something the Lord Made (2004), is my personal favourite, and follows the life of Vivien Thomas, an African American surgical technician who never had the chance to attend medical school, but who was a pioneer in the treatment of blue babies in the racially charged 1940s.

And with all of this drama, we need to finish the list with at least one comedy, which is why we chose



Doc Hollywood (1991). A classic tale of a big city doctor, played by Michael J. Fox, who must learn to work in a small town.

Alright, I know I said top five, but I have to include one more personal favourite, **The Dream Team** (1989), a real laugh riot which follows a group of psychiatric patients who lose their way in New York City and must solve a homicide after their doctor loses his memory. So next time you need a break from biochemistry, why not watch one of these, they'll entertain and teach you something at the same time!

DDFT Students Participate in Recruitment Drive

Recruitment continues to find the best and the brightest that Micronesia has to offer in becoming the doctors and dentists of tomorrow.

The second cohort of the DDFT program will begin their studies in summer 2017, and will include students from all four States of the FSM.

During a recent visit to the Seventh Day Adventist School in Pohnpei, potential DDFT student had the chance to hear from, Ms Naomi Nakasoni, who is a graduate of the school, and Ms Caroline Apaisam. Both students spoke about the rewards of being in the program, including the additional resources, such as laptop computers and special classes, the program offers. They also spoke about the satisfaction of learning through solving real problems, such as learning about common fractures in their anatomy class, instead of just memorising a list of bones. Ms Apaisam and Ms Nakasoni also spoke about the challenges of the program, and stated that sometimes their professors are hard on them, but that is only '...because they believe in us, know we can do better, and want us to succeed.'

Plans are underway to take DDFT students on recruitment trips to all of the Pohnpei-based high schools.



Special Lecture Provided on Physical Diagnosis

Every healthcare provider needs to be able to make accurate diagnosis by completing a thorough history and physical examination. In fact, ninety-five percent of a diagnosis is based on the history and physical examination alone.

That's why Dr Paul Dacanay recently provided a special session



to DDFT student on how to conduct a history and physical examination.

Dr Dacanay introduced students to the basics of physical examination, including auscultation (listening, as

through a stethoscope), palpitation (touching and feeling the patient), percussion (tapping body organs from the surface to listen to tonal differences), and more. Students were introduced to the correct usage of the stethoscope for listening to lung, heart, and bowel sounds. The use of pen lights to examine pupillary reflexes. Reflex hammers for testing reflexes of the upper and lower limbs. Tuning forks for testing cranial nerves. Sphygmomanometers for measuring blood pressure. And the otolaryngoscope for examining the eyes, ears, nose and throat of patients.

Students were then given the chance to practice on each other under the supervision of Dr Dacanay.

Early clinical skills are a hallmark of the DDFT program, which when coupled with the opportunity to observe physicians and nurses from the first week in the hospital, clinics, and public health department, is just one more way that DDFT is preparing students for success.



Students Learn Fracture Care and Dermatology

A 25-year-old male is brought to the emergency department at Chuuk State Hospital. The patient was the unrestrained driver in a two vehicle accident, and has an open fracture of the right femur and a possible pneumothorax.

What would you expect the patient's vital signs to be? How would you describe the femoral fracture? Is this a surgical emergency, and why? And what are your immediate next steps in management?

Most eighteen year olds wouldn't have a clue how to answer these questions. But the DDFT students are not ordinary eighteen year olds – they're the future healthcare providers and leaders of FSM.

Such is a typical PBL problem DDFT students are faced with on a daily basis to teach the basic sciences of anatomy, physiology, biochemistry, and more using real-life scenarios as opposed to traditional lectures.

In the past two weeks Dr Mangum has taught the anatomy and physiology of the skeletal system by learning about typical fractures they will see in practice, as well

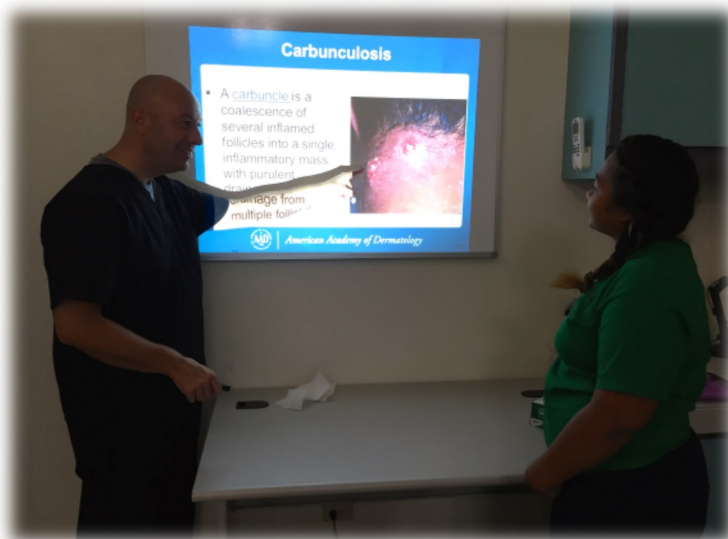


as the connection between osteoporosis, hormones, and menopause.

Dr Mangum also provided instruction to students in skin cancer, common bacterial skin infections in adults and children, and the treatment of acne vulgaris as they learned the integumentary system.

The DDFT program is committed to giving students the best possible education in preparing them to be healthcare providers. Studies show that when student learn by doing, and through real-life application of knowledge, not just theory, the results are greater student enthusiasm and engagement in the learning process, as well as better long-term retention of information.

The same approach to PBL used by the DDFT program is also the method used for teaching in some of the world's premier medical schools, including Harvard University in the USA, and McMaster's University in Canada, as well as Pacific Basin medical schools, such as Fiji National University.



Mental Hack for Better Memory: Spaced Repetition

Want to study better, not harder? Here's how with spaced repetition

Even in the PBL environment there are still things you just have to memorize. Welcome to medical school!

But when it comes to memorizing information, the age-old approach of reading the textbook multiple times over doesn't work. So put down that 600-page physiology textbook, and that can of energy drink (see last month's edition if you're still using energy drinks), and learn about spaced repetition, the mental hack that can help you earn an A.

Spaced repetition is based upon how your mind works, which is the key to why it's successful. One way of doing spaced repetition, and guess what DDFT students, we've told you about this before, is the use of flashcards!

Use index cards to create vocabulary words, with the word on one side, and answer on the other. Or you can put questions on the card that you have to answer.

For example, consider our old friend the lysosome that Dr Mangum loves so much. What information do you need to know about lysosomes? Well, not just the definition, but also the diseases that are associated with lysosomal defects, such as Tay-Sachs Disease, Parkinson's, and even Alzheimer's – and don't forget the role of the lysosome in the smooth endoplasmic reticulum of the liver when it comes to detoxifying drugs like alcohol and phenobarbital as it relates to epilepsy. See how that works?

Now, as you go through your flash cards, you'll realise some you know very well, and some you are still struggling with.

For those you know well, move them to a different section of your accordion file (yes, the same file Mr Wyatt loves, and hopefully so do you), where you will study them less frequently. But still study them, as everyone forgets, and you need reminders. Meanwhile, focus the bulk of your review on those cards you still struggle with until you master them as well.

Faculty to Present at PIHOA Meeting in Saipan



Ms Holly Lyons and Dr Brian Mangum will present on the success of the DDFT program to the Pacific Island Health Officers' Association (PIHOA) meeting in Saipan in late March.

The duo will present on the successes and lessons learned from the DDFT program as it prepares to take its second cohort of students in summer 2017. Ms Lyons will speak on innovative methods for teaching English, including the use of case-based research articles dealing with pressing healthcare issues in Micronesia, which students must present on each week; as well as the use of wrap-around services, such as counselling, study hall, journal clubs, and other opportunities to enhance student success.

Dr Mangum will speak on the innovative use of patient cases which students must solve in groups each week for teaching the basic science subjects which traditionally rely heavily on theoretical lectures. In the DDFT program the basic sciences are taught through application to patients. Multiple weekly student presentations on health topics are just one way that DDFT is preparing students to not only be healthcare providers, but also healthcare leaders for Micronesia. Through this approach, students gain

experience in academic research and presentations, as well as the confidence to speak in front of groups – all key elements to the success of future physicians and dentists.



PIHOA is one of the three sponsoring agencies of the DDFT program, which also include COM-FSM and the John A. Burns School of Medicine Area Health Education Center at the University of Hawai'i.

Pacific Med Schools Offer Chances to Specialise

While most medical school graduates will enter primary care as a general practitioner following their one-year internship, Micronesia is in need of specialists as well. So what opportunities are there to specialise without leaving the Pacific, and which prepare you to return home to offer advanced care?

As it turns out, there are tons of opportunities. This includes the University of Papua New Guinea, where local surgeon Dr Johnny Hedson trained, which offers post-graduate qualifications in internal medicine, pae-



diatrics, general surgery, obstetrics and gynaecology, anaesthesiology, emergency medicine (one of my favourites), pathology, ophthalmology, otorhinolaryngology (ear, nose, and throat), radiology, psychiatry, derma-

tology, rural health, and public health.

Meanwhile, the College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences at Fiji National University also offers opportunities to specialise in anaesthesiology, internal medicine, general surgery, obstetrics and gynaecology, mental health, and emergency medicine; as well as oral surgery for dental graduates.

So for those of you who dream of becoming the next surgeon in Pohnpei, or the first pathologist or psychiatrist from Micronesia, opportunities abound right here in the Pacific.

SPECIALTY ROUNDUP

As DDFT students prepare to become the healthcare leader and providers of tomorrow, they are exposed to a range of specialties in both the PBL teaching, as well as in the hospitals and clinics from both local physicians, as well as specialists from overseas, such as ophthalmologists from the Moran Eye Center at the University of Utah, and others.

Students are sometimes bemused by the range of terms used to describe these specialties. For example, what is otolaryngologist, and is it the same as an ear, nose, and throat surgeon? As such, in a new column, The Heartbeat will explore different specialties each month to help students not only understand the different specialties, but also perhaps be encouraged to specialise themselves. This month, we will explore dermatology and orthopaedic surgery, given that recent PBL cases in anatomy and physiology have dealt with both of these topics.

Hair, Skin, Nails and More: What is a Dermatologist?

Many people think of acne when they hear the term dermatologist. But it actually much more than that. Dermatology involves the diagnosis and treatment of skin diseases and cancers, as well as cosmetic and ageing conditions of the skin, fat, hair, nails and oral and genital membranes, and the management of these through medications, surgery, immunological therapy, laser treatments and more. It's an important field, and one in which you can specialise at the University of Papua New Guinea.

Bones and Fractures Galore: The World of Orthopaedic Surgery

An orthopaedic surgeon is a specialist who has been trained in the diagnosis and management of diseases and injuries of the musculoskeletal system. But it isn't just fixing fractured femurs or ACL tears. And while all orthopaedic surgeons love being in theatre, they can also treat non-surgical conditions such as arthritis, cerebral palsy, osteoporosis and more.

Health Promotion and Social Media: DDFT Students Reach Thousands!

DDFT students recently submitted midterms in Expository Writing on the importance of eating local food. The first part required students to submit a newspaper style article on the importance of eating local food and the health benefits of doing so. For the second component, students made a video convincing viewers to "Go Local". DDFT students had the option to submit their videos on Facebook and share them with their friends. In total, at the time of press, the students had over 15,000 views! That is incredible! Kun Neth, from Kosrae, has over 5,000 views alone! Joyceleen Panuel, from Pohnpei, has over 2,300 herself.

Based on the population of Pohnpei (34,000) and the FSM (105,000), this means that 44% of Pohnpeians and 14% of the entire FSM could have potentially viewed the students' work. DDFT students have huge potential to reach a wide number of citizens; this is important because they are the future doctors, dentists, and healthcare leaders of tomorrow!

PROFILES IN SUCCESS

Joyceleen Panuel / Pohnpei

Originally from Joyce's desire to become a physician is born out of personal experiences in her own life, as well as the lives of her loved ones. Joyce's own mother suffers from cardiovascular problems, and Joyceleen is deaf. Because of this, Joyceleen would like to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to one day return to Pohnpei to help other persons with disabilities, as well as people like her mom. Joyceleen states that she knows many people in the FSM suffer needlessly because they do not have access to physician and other providers.

The FSM currently has a shortage of healthcare providers in all four states, which is one of the reasons the DDFT program was developed, to prepare Micronesians to be the Micronesian healthcare providers and leaders of tomorrow.



When asked what she has enjoyed most about the program, Joyceleen states that it is the teamwork and pride that come from meeting the high standards of the professors in the PBL sessions. She says that she gets excited when she and her team must dig deeper below the surface to truly understand what is wrong with a patient, and how that relates to the science subjects they are learning. And then there is the confidence that she and the others have gained by being able to present their topics on a weekly basis, answer the probing and frequently difficult questions of the professors.

This is a key highlight of the DDFT program, or teaching students to be lifelong learners who believe in themselves, and their ability to solve problems through teamwork, leadership, and hard work.

As part of the DDFT program, professors use the Socratic method to dig deep into what a student knows, demanding that the student always improve by learning more. In addition to the confidence that comes from mastering the PBL problems, Joyceleen also mentions that DDFT has given her the chance to work alongside students from different states, to learn about their culture, language, and most of all to become a family – a family that will one day be the doctors and dentists of tomorrow for all of Micronesia.

Kun R. Neth / Kosrae

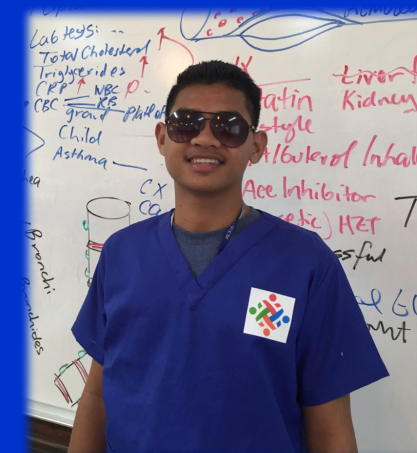
Kun is from the Island of the Sleeping Lady, Kosrae, which is where he would like to return to practice when he finishes the DDFT program and medical school. But Kun doesn't want to go back home to be just to be any type of doctor. No, Kun has a specific type of doctor in mind. And it is one that is desperately needed across all of the four states of the FSM.

After spending the summer and fall sessions rotating through various departments at Pohnpei State Hospital, Kun has decided that he would like to be a general surgeon. Currently, the surgical workforce of the FSM is rapidly approaching retirement, which is why it is so important that Kun, and other DDFT students, be exposed to the different specialties early on, so that they know what type of medicine they would like to practice.

Early clinical exposure to the various departments, such as surgery, family medicine, paediatrics, and others is one of the key features of the DDFT program. Early clinical exposure gives students a chance to learn from practitioners, and apply what they are learning in their PBL sessions in the hospitals and clinics.

In fact, this is one thing Kun really enjoys about the program, or that it is based on solving real-life problems in PBL sessions. Kun states that the PBL approach makes it easier to understand the material, and that he and his classmates can retain the information because it is applied. But it isn't all patients and PBL sessions in the DDFT program.

When asked about his favourite memory thus far, Kun replied that the special welcome dinner has been one of the highlights of the program. The welcome dinner featured local dancers, a roast pig, speeches from traditional leaders, and more. But most of all it featured a special ceremony in which students were welcomed into the community of scholars that make up the DDFT program.



Students were also taught how important they are to their people, their islands, and the future of the FSM. The importance of this knowledge can be seen in Kun's resolve to help, '...my family, my neighbour, my people stay healthy in the future.'

Students Present Solutions to High Oral Cancer Rates in the FSM

As part of the ongoing commitment of the DDFT program to prepare students to be not only healthcare providers, but also healthcare leaders for the FSM, students examine and present on research undertaken on the leading causes of disease and death in Micronesia. This allows students to become more versed in the challenges of healthcare in Micronesia, but also improves their research and presentation skills.

Students present weekly on the topic of discussion. Past research and presentations have dealt with cancer, reliance on imported foods, cardiovascular disease, and other issues. But students don't just present the findings of others, they must also develop valid solutions to these issues from a clinical standpoint as well as a public health prevention standpoint.

Recently, students presented research on the rates of oral cancer in Micronesia and its association with betel nut chewing. Through group research, students learned that the cancerous effects of the betel nuts are compounded when combined with tobacco and lime. In presenting solutions to such, students proposed greater public education beginning with school children on the risks of betel nuts, given that many Micronesians believe that betel nut is healthy, and can prevent oral cancer. Encouraging physicians to educate their patients on the risks of oral cancer and offer help in quitting. And finally, banning the sale of betel nuts to minors, to go along with recent legislation banning the chewing of betel nuts in hospitals, schools, and colleges.

The DDFT program prides itself on training students to focus not just on cures, but also prevention, given that the largest burden of disease in the region comes from NCDs, which are largely preventable.

RED CARPET PREMIER: NEW DDFT VIDEOS AVAILABLE ONLINE

Three new videos were released during the months of February and March which explain the many benefits of the DDFT program while highlighting our wonderful students in their daily lives as the future doctors and dentists of Micronesia.

Two of the videos, which were directly produced by DDFT, are now available for viewing online at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC9i2LX2iFJ-0efMKFtr7Zlg>.

While the third video, which was produced by Micronesian Productions, is being used in the recruitment efforts for the second cohort to begin in summer 2017.

Steps-to-Success Show Marked Improvement

Steps-to-Success is a special DDFT program for those students who need additional assistance to succeed in the high-stress environment of the program.

The program, which was launched in January 2017, provides for additional tutoring and more frequent meetings both as a group and individual with faculty members for students who need additional assistance as they work towards their goals of becoming the doctors and dentists for tomorrow.

Additionally, professors and staff share motivational moments from their own lives in how they overcame obstacles to reach their goals with the message of, 'If I can do it, so you can you!' Since its inception, many participants have shown marked improvement in areas such as grades, motivation, and general professionalism in terms of their interaction with peers, faculty, and others.

These changes have been warmly welcomed by DDFT faculty and staff, who provide feedback and encouragement to students enrolled in the program. Steps-to-Success is just one more way that DDFT is providing the support and motivation students need to become the healthcare leaders and providers of tomorrow in Micronesia.

PROFILES IN SUCCESS

Gianna Bisalen / Chuuk



When Gianna came to Pohnpei, she already knew what kind of doctor she wanted to be, based upon personal experience with her family. According to Gianna, both of her grandparents suffer from eye problems, and have had difficulty getting the services they need locally.

That's why Gianna's goal is to become an ophthalmologist, so that she can return and provide eye care to the people of Chuuk. But Gianna knows that ophthalmologists are important, and there are few available in

the FSM, so she states happily that if needed, she will go to any of the four states to help people with their eyesight. Gianna is right on track in wanting to be an ophthalmologist, as diabetes-related eye problems are a significant issue in all of the FSM, as well as across the entire Pacific.

And while there are training programs available at the Pacific Eye Centre in Suva, Fiji, there have been few graduates from this program that have come to Micronesia. Currently, the FSM relies heavily on visits from outside organisations such as the Moran Eye Center at the University of Utah, and a few local eye physicians, to provide periodic eye surgeries and other care to the FSM. The addition of more local ophthalmologists, such as Gianna, would significantly reduce the need for outside assistance and costly medical referrals.

The DDFT program knows that local students are more likely to return to care for their fellow islanders, which is one of the reasons the program was established. Gianna knows this well, and states that she is very excited to be a member of the first DDFT cohort, to be part of a pioneering effort along with her fellow Micronesians to improve the health security of her homeland.

When asked about her favourite parts of the program, Gianna mentioned the challenges of the PBL cases and the high standards that her professors set, and how happy she is to be receiving such a quality education right here in the FSM. And while Gianna does miss her family back home, she wouldn't want to be any place else but right here in the DDFT program.

Scarlett Lebehn / Pohnpei

Scarlett is from capital of the FSM, Pohnpei, and would like to specialise in paediatrics when she finishes medical school. Scarlett is strongly motivated by her family and her faith, and is fond of quoting scripture to remind herself and others that medicine is not just a job, but a calling to help the people of Micronesia live stronger, healthier, and more fulfilling lives.

One of the reasons Scarlett would like to be a paediatrician is that she knows most NCDs, such as obesity and heart disease, begin in childhood; so she would like to focus her practice on not only curative paediatrics, but also prevention.

Prevention is a critical component of the DDFT program. Past medical programs in Pohnpei showed that local graduates will not only become clinicians, but also healthcare leaders, such as directors and secretaries of health across Micronesia. That is one reason why in addition to clinical training, the program also focuses on developing policy-based and public health interventions to the major sources of death and disease impacting Micronesia today.

As a paediatrician with this knowledge, Scarlett will be well-prepared to not only see patients, but also to propose the policies and interventions that will be needed in the future to keep children health. When asked about her favourite memory thus far, Scarlett replied that it has been living in the dormitories, and in particular her first week during the summer basic science boot camp, where she first met her roommates and others who would become her DDFT family.

One of the hallmarks of the DDFT program is the cohort model in which students live, eat, work, study, and learn together. By building a sense of teamwork and cohesion, students are better prepared for the challenges of medical school. In addition to the residence life experience provided by DDFT, which includes wrap-around support services, Scarlett is also a huge fan of the PBL. She states that the PBL was stressful at first, but with the support of her DDFT family and instructors, she soon learned to love this method of teaching for its real-life applications.



What is DDFT?

The Doctors and Dentists for Tomorrow program is a two-and-a-half-year program to prepare high-performing students from the four states of the Federated States of Micronesia to be competitive for entry into regional medical and dental schools, as well as prepare for success in upper-level baccalaureate pre-medical and pre-dental programs at other Pacific Rim institutions of higher learning.

This intensive program includes a summer basic science 'boot camp' with courses taught in the problem-based learning (PBL) style, the standard format of instruction common in regional medical and dental schools, as well as other health science programs globally.

The summer boot camp is followed by two additional years of science courses which emphasize application of knowledge to clinical settings. A hallmark of the DDFT program is early access to clinical settings, with students rotating through hospitals, clinics, and the public health department. Students are given access to a range of wrap-around services to promote success, including mandatory study hall, tutoring sessions, counselling, special training courses, guest lecturers, international faculty, an emphasis on the health issues facing Micronesia, and much more.

Want to learn more?

Please contact Mr Robert Spegal, DDFT Program Manager, at robertspegal@yahoo.com

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More than just a pre-medical or pre-dental program ...

A preparatory program for leadership and success in Micronesia!

- **Preparing Micronesians to be the Micronesian healthcare providers and leaders of tomorrow**
- **Intensive preparation for medical and dental school**
- **Preparation for upper-level bachelor's degree programs**
- **International faculty**
- **Early clinical exposure in hospitals and clinics**
- **Basic science summer boot camp**
- **Emphasis on PBL and applied clinical learning**
- **Wrap-around support services, such as study hall and counselling**
- **Emphasis on policy and prevention, not just medicine and dentistry**
- **Emphasis on learning public presentation and critical thinking skills through researching and proposing an-**



Doctors and Dentists for Tomorrow (DDFT)

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